

**In the Claims:**

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the case.

1. (Canceled).
2. (Currently amended): Isolated *Escherichia coli* strain W (*E. coli*) having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294, wherein said isolated *E. coli* does not contain genetic material of bacteriophage Wphi.
3. (Currently amended): Isolated *E. coli* strain W having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294, wherein said isolated *E. coli* are does not contain genetic material of bacteriophage Mu.
4. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 2, wherein said isolated *E. coli* additionally do not contain genetic material of one or more bacteriophage types selected from the group consisting of Mu, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7.
5. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* lack detectable levels of at least one endogenous plasmid.
6. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 2, wherein said isolated *E. coli* lack detectable levels of at least one endogenous plasmid.
7. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 3, wherein said isolated *E. coli* lack detectable levels of at least one endogenous plasmid.

8. (Currently amended): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* contain one or more genotype markers selected from the group consisting of: *recA*−, *lacZ*−, *Δlon*, *ompT*−, *endA1*, *mae*−, *rna1*−, *hsdR17*(rK−, mK+), *hsdS20*(rB−, mB+), ~~*merA*~~, *mcrA*, *mcrB*, *mrr*, *deoR*, *supE* and *supF*.
9. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* contain one or more genotype markers selected from the group consisting of: *recA1*, *recA13*, *ΔrecA*, *lacX74*, and *lacZΔM15*.
10. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* contain an F' episome or portions thereof.
11. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.
12. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.
13. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 4, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.
14. (Canceled)
- 15 – 76. Canceled).
77. (Currently amended): A composition comprising isolated *E. coli* strain W, wherein the isolated *E. coli* of said composition have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294, and wherein the *E. coli* of said composition do not contain the genetic material of bacteriophage Mu.

78. (Previously presented): The composition of claim 77, wherein the isolated *E. coli* of said composition is a derivative of JDP674.
79. (Currently amended): A composition comprising isolated *E. coli* strain W, wherein the isolated *E. coli* of said composition have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294, and wherein the *E. coli* of said composition do not contain the genetic material of bacteriophage Wphi.
- 80- 107. (Canceled).
108. (Currently amended): Isolated *Escherichia coli* strain W (*E. coli*) having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294, wherein said isolated *E. coli* is cured of at least one bacteriophage.
109. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein the at least one bacteriophage is selected from the list Wphi, Mu, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 and T7.
110. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein the bacteriophage is Wphi.
111. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein the bacteriophage is Mu.
112. (Canceled)
113. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein at least a portion of the isolated *E. coli* lack detectable levels of at least one endogenous plasmid.

114. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein at least a portion of the *E. coli* are rendered competent.
115. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein at least a portion of the *E. coli* are rendered chemically competent.
116. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein at least a portion of the *E. coli* are rendered electro-competent.
117. (Previously presented): The isolated *E. coli* of claim 108, wherein the growth rate of the *E. Coli* is between 25% to 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.